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## PRINCE BISMARCK AND GERMAN UNITY.<sup>1</sup>

THE unification of Germany and its subsequent elevation to the rank of a world-power is one of the most striking facts of the second half of the present century. Why the national spirit did not triumph earlier has been variously explained. Unquestionably, however, the most potent deterrent force to anything among the Germans approaching the political crystallization witnessed several hundred years ago in England, France, and other countries of Western Europe is to be found in the fiction of the Holy Roman Empire. For, naturally enough, in endeavoring to realize the bold dreams of Charles the Great, and of that Otto who by his contemporaries was styled "the wonder of the world," German princes lost the substance of the crown in grasping after its shadow. Hence feudalism, while fading gradually from neighboring western lands, gained a fresh lease of life on Germanic soil. A great change, to be sure, was wrought in 1806, when Napoleon snatched from Austria's feeble hands that imperial crown which for ten centuries had helped enormously to shape the course of events on the Continent; but, despite the visions of poets and the efforts of patriots, the great German people were for three-quarters of a century longer condemned to a disunion which was quite as much the work of foreign foes as of dynastic jealousies and ancient ideas of particularism at home. Meanwhile light was to come from the north. To Prussia, which in the disaster of Jena and Auerstadt had witnessed the apparently hopeless collapse of the work of Frederick the Great, was intrusted the magnificent though stupendous task of freeing Germany by driving out Austria, and of uniting the Fatherland by conquering France. Accordingly, the history of Germany

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<sup>1</sup>"Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman. The Reflections and Reminiscences of Otto, Prince von Bismarck." Two volumes. Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1899. "Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of His History." By Dr. Moritz Busch. Two volumes. Macmillan, 1898. "Bismarck and German Unity." By Monroe Smith. Macmillan, 1898.

for the past four decades is in no slight measure the history of Prussia. How this small power emerged from the obscurity to which the Napoleonic wars had consigned it; how in the course of time it acquired among the states of Germany the leadership that surely belonged to it, no less by the claims of right than by those of might; how it avenged the wrongs inflicted by the first Napoleon by destroying the last; and, finally, how in 1871, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, it reversed the judgment of 1806 by crowning its own king emperor of the newly created empire of united Germany—how all these achievements were won the historian of Germany, and indeed the historian of the world, will always love to narrate. But it would carry us too far afield to venture in this connection upon anything approaching even an outline of German history; and the foregoing observations have been made largely for the purpose of expressing the conviction that Germany never could have attained either to independence or unity without the noble services of that man who a little more than a year ago passed away in the loneliness and bitterness known only to fallen greatness. For to Germany's lasting shame be it said, Bismarck was forced to realize in his old age that monarchies no less than republics may forget past benefits, and that he is poor indeed who hangs on princes' favors.

It is Carlyle who calls Napoleon our last great man. By an extraordinary historical coincidence, however, the same year that saw Napoleon's sun set at Waterloo witnessed the birth of the great German who of all the men of this century more nearly approaches him in genius and in action, and whose wonderful faculties were, curiously enough, destined in large measure to be devoted to undoing the work of the Corsican adventurer. But in attempting to delineate the career and character of such a personage as Prince Bismarck, one is apt to suffer from more than the ordinary difficulties of a biographer. As far as continental affairs are concerned, many of the most familiar political situations are the creations of Bismarck. A Bismarckian atmosphere surrounds the present. The times in which he won his most brilliant

diplomatic and political victories are fresh in the memory of this generation, and contemporary opinion must of necessity lack the impartiality of posterity. Notwithstanding these obstacles, however, one would scarcely feel disposed to regret having lived in the same age that saw the fruits of such a man's apprehensive intelligence and heroic energy; for Bismarck was surely one of those genuine kings of men like Cæsar, Frederick the Great, Cromwell, Washington, and Napoleon, who will always live in history, since they are the apostles of order and the founders of empires. It is the work of men like these that has given rise to the so-called great-man theory of history—a theory which in the hands of Carlyle loses sight of the slow evolution of popular institutions, and makes of history nothing more or less than the essence of innumerable biographies. But without going to such lengths, and with a full realization of the influence exerted on national development by community of blood and language—not to mention numerous other elements in the life of a state—an impartial mind is obliged to concede that it was Bismarck who with iron heart and iron hammer beat and fused into one symmetrical whole the age-long repellent branches of the Germanic family. Such a Titan is often called upon to guide and control those great moral currents which help to make or mar the happiness of mankind; and, once persuaded that he is a Heaven-sent messenger to his people, he bravely takes up his work unmindful of popular clamor. Bismarck was such a man. Like all men of deeds, as opposed to men of words, he believed firmly in a God above, and with unexampled disinterestedness consecrated his rare physical and intellectual faculties to the mission he thought his God had sent him on. Equally as well adapted to that mission both by temperament and education, Bismarck appears to have been peculiarly fitted for his illustrious career by his antecedents. And while it is true that Germany's history for the past four decades is in no slight measure the history of Prussia, it must at the same time be granted that Prussia's history for the same period is scarcely less the biography of Bismarck.

The volumes before us therefore possess an enduring interest and value, for they not only give us an account of the strongest personality of modern Germany, but also throw a strong light on the history of continental Europe. Prince Bismarck's own reflections naturally appeal to every reader of history. His profound knowledge of men and affairs gives to all his reminiscences a peculiar charm, and no less attractive is the plain, straightforward, soldierlike manner in which he writes. Scarcely less interesting and valuable are the volumes of Herr Busch, long the companion, secretary, and shadow of his illustrious master; but whether Herr Busch is a Boswell or not the future alone can determine. Prof. Munroe Smith's little work is a marvel of condensation. His long residence in Germany, together with his close study of the affairs of that country, have given his essay the value of a standard authority. But it is time to say something of Prince Bismarck's early life.

Otto Edward Leopold von Bismarck was born April 1, 1815, at Schönhausen, the ancestral seat of his noble family, in the Old Mark of Brandenburg. For generations back his ancestors had been active in the military and civil service of the sovereigns of Prussia. His father, Karl von Bismarck, after rising to the rank of captain in the army, quitted it in order to lead the quiet life of a country gentleman, more absorbed in the excitement of the chase than in the care of the princely estates which he inherited. Frau Louise von Bismarck, the mother of the future chancellor, was the daughter of Anastatius Ludwig Menken, who is said to have served with distinction under as many as three Prussian kings, acquiring under Frederick William III. more than the ordinary prominence of a privy counselor. Of the six children of Bismarck's parents only two besides Otto reached maturity. These were Bernhard, five years his senior, and Malvina, younger by a dozen years than the more celebrated of her brothers. It was to this much-beloved sister that Bismarck wrote many of his most famous letters, wherein is exhibited not only his deeply affectionate and religious nature, but also the gradual ripening of his political

views and aims during the many years embraced by the correspondence.

A year after his birth his parents removed from Schönhofen to Kniephof, a Pomeranian estate to which they succeeded on the death of a kinsman. It was here, surrounded by woods and meadows, that Bismarck gained his earliest impressions; and the lifelong devotion that he displayed, both in social and political life, to landed interests may in large measure be ascribed to the influences exerted by this early home. As may be inferred from what has been said already, the father of Bismarck seems to have been a man almost wholly destitute of ambition. His wife, on the other hand, a pious and clever woman, was not without the ambition of her sex regarding the future of her two boys. With a mother's rare insight, she intended to fit Otto for a diplomatic career; and accordingly at the early age of six he was sent to Prof. Plamann's private school in the Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin, where his brother was already a pupil. It was at this school that he laid the foundations of that extraordinary knowledge of the modern languages which was to stand him in such good stead in after years. But in spite of his urban environment the lad lost none of that love for country life which was to warm his blood until his heart was stilled forever in the Sachsenwald home. It is related of him, for example, that while yet at the primary school the sight one day of horses plowing in a field caused the little *Junker* to burst into tears. Although we have no means of testing the truth of this touching story, there is abundant testimony bearing on his attractive manners when as a youth of twelve he entered the Frederick William Gymnasium, Berlin, at that time under the directorship of Dr. Bonnell—a man long afterwards honored with the statesman's friendship. "My attention was drawn to Bismarck," says his old teacher, "on the very day of his entry, on which occasion the new boys sat in the schoolroom on rows of benches, in order that the masters could overlook the newcomers with attention during the inauguration. Otto von Bismarck sat—as I still remember, and have often related—with visible eagerness, a clear

and boyish pleasant face and bright eyes, in a gay and light-some mood, among his comrades, so that it caused me to think, 'That's a nice boy; I'll keep my eye upon him.'"

While not a diligent student, and less fond of books than of sports, Bismarck's five years at the gymnasium were neither idle nor fruitless ones. We hear of a prize awarded for proficiency in the Latin language, and the acquisition of a taste for historical studies, a taste which by subsequent cultivation resulted in a knowledge of the past scarcely excelled by that of any of his contemporaries. When the time came for him to leave the gymnasium to enter the university, Bismarck turned fondly in the direction of Heidelberg; but out of deference to the wishes of his mother, who feared lest on the Neckar her son might learn to drink beer, he gave up his own inclinations and in his seventeenth year matriculated at Göttingen, with the ostensible purpose of studying the law. Early falling a victim, however, to Frau Bismarck's abomination, Bismarck still further removed himself from earnest academic work by quickly earning wide reputation as a mighty wielder of the *schläger*—a reputation that he courageously sustained in more than a score of duels, receiving in one of them, accidentally, the coveted facial diploma of the *corpsstudenten*. Strange stories are naturally told of the manner in which he spent the only free days that ever come to the average German; nor does he appear to have become any the less irregular in his habits when in 1833 he quitted Göttingen and entered the university at Berlin. Here not even the renowned Savigny could draw him to more than three lectures on jurisprudence. So great, however, even then, were Bismarck's powers of application and concentration that his final examinations were passed successfully, and early in 1835 he was duly sworn in as *auscultator*, or court examiner. In this capacity his conduct, so far as manners are concerned, was not unexceptional, so that it must have been a source of relief both to the young man and to the sedate judiciary when the time came for him to exchange his position in the Berlin courts for a post in the administrative branch of the government at Aachen; much greater still

must have been Bismarck's happiness when his martial instincts found congenial employment in the Jäger Guard, which he entered in 1838 to pay his military debt to the state. Instead of remaining in the army, however, we find him on the expiration of his year's term of service proceeding to the aid of his brother in the repair of the family property, which had been brought perilously near the brink of ruin through the neglect of an improvident father and an invalid mother. To Bismarck fell the care of Kniephof, the affairs of which were managed in so scientific a manner—thanks to a short course of lectures the young man had attended at the Agricultural School of Eldena—that all traces of former waste and mismanagement were quickly obliterated. It is with a two-fold purpose that these incidents of Bismarck's earlier career are mentioned: they not only describe his occupations at the formative period of his life, but the experience and training in administrative affairs which he then acquired were destined to prove of inestimable service to him in the management of those wider interests intrusted to him in later years. George Washington was a Southern planter long before he was called upon to guide the American people.

In spite of Bismarck's successful agricultural labors, there often came to him moments of depression—indeed, a certain *weltschmerz*—which, bursting through the narrow puritanical conventionalities of his prim *junker* neighbors, shocked every one and acquired for the bizarre young master of Kniephof the sobriquet of “mad Bismarck.” Frau Bismarck, in the meantime, having died, Bismarck took up his residence with his father; but that he found life under these altered circumstances any the less unattractive is scarcely to be imagined in view of the complaining tone of the letters he addressed his sister in 1844. In one of them he reproaches her for having married and left desolate her bachelor brother, and he playfully declares that his days are spent “in reading, smoking, walking, helping his father eat lampreys, and joining him in a farce called fox-hunting.” But it would be unkind to infer from these statements that Bismarck was deficient in either love or respect for his aged parent for whom



he never failed to express the tenderest devotion. On the death of the old gentleman in 1845, the son, keenly sensitive to the domestic affliction, experienced with increasing frequency the old feeling of wretchedness.

Acquiring through the partition of his father's estate both Kniephof and Schönhausen, the young squire had several public offices bestowed upon him, including that of Dyke-Captain and a seat in the local legislature; but so far from becoming interested in provincial affairs, their narrowness and sordidness appear to have disgusted him so greatly that he relinquished his seat in the Pomeranian Diet to his brother. Who, therefore, could have foretold the dizzy heights to which young Bismarck, a *Junker* of the *Junkers*, was subsequently to climb? But the very stars in their courses were fighting for him; and the end of these *wanderjähre* was closer at hand than one could have imagined, closer, indeed, than even Bismarck himself suspected. The events which were to draw him into the vortex of public affairs were already the theme of the hour.

Upon Prussia stirring days had dawned. The philosophical and political theories generated in Paris had filled the whole of Europe with ferment. Sentence of death had already been imposed upon absolutism. Men fretted at the fancied delay of the execution. Nowhere, however, did monarchy sit more supremely and securely than on the throne of Prussia; and nowhere, be it added, was absolutism more paternal and better loved. But soon even Prussia, in form at least, was to join the constitutionally governed states. Indeed, Frederick William III., long before his death, had promised his people a system of national representation as a reward for the expulsion of the hated French; but all that he did was to erect in each province a diet, or legislature, composed for the most part of the landed aristocracy. Meeting triennially for purely communal purposes, such assemblies failed to satisfy the great national longing embodied in the then current expression: "*Ein freies Volk auf freiem Boden*"—a free people upon a free soil. And even those who were as far removed as possible from the nascent radicalism

of the times were not slow to discern that unless some measure of popular representation were granted, monarchy in Prussia would speedily become as unstable as in the hot atmosphere beyond the Rhine. For in the stormy period of 1847-48 Prussia, like the rest of the Continent, was seething with a discontent ominous alike not only to unlimited monarchy but to hereditary privileges of all kinds as well; and along with other importations from France came the intoxication of the masses. In Berlin, for example, there was considerable rioting; the streets were barricaded; the Prince himself was obliged to flee the land, and in flaming letters of red the revolutionary words, "National Property," had been painted on a royal residence. Meanwhile, the mentally disordered king called together in 1847 the first united diet of the three estates; but Hohenzollern pride persuaded him that what the liberals had for years been struggling for with every indication of ultimate success, he now accorded them out of the boundless goodness of his royal heart—a fact of which it would be unwise to take advantage. In other words, an indulgent parent, having given to his children an entire box of bonbons, expected them to remain quiet and not to ask him for more. It is of special interest to note that it was as a member of this first Prussian parliament that Bismarck entered upon the public career in which for many years he was actively and continuously to remain. This protracted tenure of office is a fact, among several others, which distinguishes Bismarck from the average American and European statesman who by reason of social or political vicissitudes rarely remains uninterruptedly in harness, as often as he may come and go with the shifting changes of public sentiment. Only a man of Bismarck's giant strength and proportions—in his prime he stood six feet two and tipped the beam at twenty stone—could well have borne up under the tremendous strain to which his long and varied life subjected him. It is worthy of mention in this connection that on entering upon his stormy parliamentary career Bismarck appears to have become conscious of the duties and responsibilities of life; the same year that saw him the leader of the conservatives in the Prus-

sian legislature witnessed his marriage to Fräulein Johanna von Puttkammer. Henceforth, steadied by the love he bore his devoted wife, he threw himself heart and soul into the mighty struggle of the hour as the unwavering opponent of the great liberal movement.

A firm believer in the theory of the divine rights of kings, Bismarck fancied that he saw in the rising tide of democracy the throne, symbol of law and order, in danger of being swept away; and like the sturdy Dyke-Captain that he was, he rushed forward to ward off the fast-gathering breakers. The crown must be saved from the impetuous onset of revolutionary ideas. In one of his very first speeches before parliament, that made June 1, 1847, he declared amid a chorus of disapproving shouts from the opposition that, "It is difficult to ascertain public opinion. I think I find it," he went on to say, "in some of the middle provinces, and it is the old Prussian conviction that a royal word is worth more than all the constructions and quirks applied to the letter of the law." The speaker then asserted that "the Prussian sovereigns were in possession of a crown not by grace of the people but by God's grace; an actual unconditional crown." A few months later, when he arose to declare his opposition to the extension of political privileges to the Jews, he gave expression to similar views in language perhaps even more forcible: "For me," he cried, "the words 'by the Grace of God' affixed by Christian rulers to their names, form no empty sound;" and when taunted by his opponents with the recrudescence of feudal ideas, he heeded not their sarcasm.

It is beside our purpose to describe in detail the tortuous progress of Prussia's constitution during the next few years. Through Bismarck's untiring zeal liberalism was suddenly reined up just as the race seemed won; and even the revised constitution of 1850, although it established parliamentary institutions on a firmer basis, failed to carry forward the statesmanlike plans of Vom Stein and Hardenberg. Meanwhile, in 1851, Bismarck surrendered his leadership of the conservatives to become Prussia's representative in the Diet at Frankfort-on-the-Main, then the most important ambassa-

dorial office in the gift of his king; and his eight years' experience in this capacity were the first beginnings of his diplomatic career. Among the many additions he now made to his knowledge of men and things was the realization that Austria's hegemony of Germany, created in 1815, when the Congress of Vienna erected the German Confederation, which was to last till 1866, was an insuperable barrier not only to the progress of Prussia, but also to that of all Germany. Attached up to this time to the principle of the "solidarity of conservative interests," it required this sojourn at Frankfort to dispel all former illusions and imbue him henceforward with Catonian aims respecting Austria's supremacy in the affairs of the Fatherland. So rapid, moreover, had been the growth of his influence, that we see him making frequent journeys between Frankfort and Berlin in order to confer with the Manteuffel ministry. His life at Frankfort also laid bare to his searching gaze the emptiness and chicanery of the prevailing methods of diplomacy. Behind the thin veil of mystery he detected the shallow pretexts and vulgar lying that passed for statecraft, and with characteristic humor he denounced the whole miserable system as a sham and a cheat. "I am making enormous progress," he writes his sister, "in the art of saying nothing in a great many words. I write reports of many sheets, which read as tersely and roundly as leading articles; and if Manteuffel can say what there is in them, after he has read them, he can do more than I can. Each of us pretends to believe of his neighbor that he is full of thoughts and plans, if he would only tell, and at the same time we none of us know an atom more of what is going to happen to Germany than of next year's snow. Nobody, not even the most malicious skeptic of a democrat, believes what quackery and self-importance there is in this diplomatizing." Who can say that it was not this manifest disgust with the quibbling and prevaricating witnessed at Frankfort which led Bismarck to adopt that candor and straightforwardness whose very audacity usually caused his enemies to believe exactly the opposite of what he told them? Just why he was in 1859 transferred from Frankfort to the court of St. Petersburg is not

altogether clear. Possibly it was a sop to Austria, which, through Count Thun, had several times been reminded by Bismarck that Prussia could not be always expected to occupy a back seat. His three years' residence on the Neva brought him in close contact with Prince Gortchakof, then at the height of his fame, and also enabled Bismarck subsequently to turn to good account his knowledge of Russian ideals and measures.

Recalled from St. Petersburg in 1862, to be sent on the mission to France, he employed his few months' residence in Paris in taking the measure of Napoleon III., with whom he was already acquainted; but events in Prussia soon led to his return to Berlin to become minister-president under the new King William, destined to become the first emperor. Prussia had now become convinced, largely through Bismarck's influence, that Austria's supremacy could be destroyed only by armed force, and that although temporary expedients might succeed in postponing the conflict between Hapsburger and Hohenzollern, it could not prevent it. Hence Prussia must be ready when the time came. That the first step, moreover, to be taken was an increase of the army was too plain for argument. But some were far from being of this mind, and in the lower house of the Prussian Parliament they were strong enough to defeat the proposed budget. The king was bewildered by the perplexities of a novel situation. He did not know what to do. Some say he contemplated abdicating. To support his tottering throne he accordingly summoned Bismarck from Paris and placed him at the head of the ministry at the very time Bismarck wished to be set there. If the sovereign was timid and uncertain in the face of the tempest which raged about his head, not so was his pilot. With outspoken boldness Bismarck announced his policy by saying that the great questions of the day "were not to be decided by speeches and majorities," which had been the error, to his mind, of 1848-49, "but by blood and iron." The recalcitrant Parliament was accordingly dissolved, and personal government for a short time ruled with unbridled power.

The work of organizing the army went on, but no money bill was passed. Bismarck's work was as thorough as that of Strafford; and although it was at that time more than once hinted that his fate might be that of the luckless minister of Charles I., he quietly remarked that under some circumstances it was as honorable to die on the scaffold as on the battlefield. Absolutism, of course, can never become popular in a free country; but in viewing this parliamentary struggle in Prussia we are not to lose sight of the circumstances of the age and place. What fate, moreover, would have overtaken Prussia if Bismarck had not resorted to his *coup d'état* in 1862 we can only conjecture. Like Cromwell, he knew far more than the inexperienced and fatuous separatists, who in and out of Parliament raised their voices in behalf of an isolation no longer possible or desirable. So to preserve the rights of the crown as he interpreted those rights; to prepare his country for the struggle he saw in the distance; and to place at the head of the German states his own German, Protestant, advancing Prussia, in room of Austria—more Slav than Teutonic, and ever ultramontane and reactionary—such were now his aims. Nor would he brook any interference either from Parliament or king, and while whispering to William words of encouragement, he scornfully brushed aside the republican hosts. Gone now are those liberal ideas whose expression in the academic discussions of earlier years used to fall harshly on the ears of his conservative companions; and gone, too, are all factious opinions which narrowed his views to Prussia. Henceforth Bismarck is a German, whatever may be said in respect of the natural affection he ever retained for the state of his birth; and Prussia, too, is to have her share of glory as she moves majestically along the road cut for her. It cannot well be denied that the three wars, which she soon fought in quick succession, resulting in victories no less magnificent than far-reaching in their results, were due almost entirely to Bismarck's prudence and foresight, although there are not a few who are inclined to accuse him of fostering conditions which made it impossible for a nation to avoid a conflict with honor.

It will not be our purpose to narrate at length the familiar events leading up to the unhappy differences between Prussia and Denmark. Whatever be the merits of the Schleswig-Holstein controversy, it can scarcely be denied that Christian IX. displayed a singular lack of regard for public opinion when in 1863 he allowed himself to be persuaded to annex the duchies; and the claim of his enemies that the union of the duchies with the crown of Denmark was a purely personal one seems by no means unreasonable. There were certainly two sides to the question; and Prussia's remonstrances, especially in view of the London Treaty of 1852, were far from being captious. But the most astonishing feature of the dispute was the adroitness with which Bismarck not only tied Austrian hands in the brief struggle of 1864, but actually succeeded in prevailing upon the court of Vienna to send to Prussia's aid both men and munitions of war. In other words, he converted into an Austro-Prussian struggle against Denmark what under less clever management might have been the sole effort of Prussia weakened by the latent or active opposition of the South. Aside, however, from this skillful manipulation of the circumstances of the times, Bismarck's acute penetration detected the weak points in the army organization of Prussia, and so rapidly and completely did he carry forward the work of correcting the evils that in 1866, when the long-expected struggle with Austria occurred, Prussia was not unprepared. While it would be uncharitable to lay upon Bismarck the entire responsibility for the great Peloponnesian War of Germany, it cannot be claimed that he was free from blame in the matter. At the same time, one should not lose sight of the increasing desire for freedom and unity everywhere manifest—a desire still further stimulated by Italy's overthrow of Austrian domination. Granting, however, that Bismarck purposely tied up relations between Prussia and Austria with regard to the Schleswig-Holstein territory in such a manner that only the sword could unloose the knot, it must be conceded that he was right in saying that to look for a peaceable settlement of the dispute was no

less dangerous than foolish. After the splendid victory at Königgratz, however, had secured for Germany her long-coveted freedom, it was the astuteness of Bismarck that warned his impetuous countrymen against cherishing the delusion that they could conquer the world. Turning a deaf ear, therefore, to all proposals which looked to the unnecessary humiliation of a defeated rival, he prudently avoided a course by which to the inveterate dynastic and religious differences of the past would have been added in future an element of revenge, which would have caused Austria to fling herself into the arms of Germany's first foreign enemy. Wisely contenting himself with the dissolution of the old confederation, Bismarck refrained from excessive demands during the negotiations preliminary to the Peace of Prague. The indemnity of \$15,000,000 and the annexation of the duchies, Frankfort, Hanover, and a few other small states, were demands by no means unreasonable, the increase of territory enabling Prussia to perfect the organization of the North German Confederation under her leadership, and with Bismarck (now a count) as Chancellor. Parliamentary government had meanwhile been restored to Prussia, and shortly after the close of the so-called Seven Weeks' War with Austria, Bismarck, in the interest of domestic tranquillity, had asked "indemnity" for his revolutionary methods respecting the budget. Is it necessary to add that the legislature, now that Bismarck had won in a game on which, according to his own admission, he had staked his life, gratefully passed a sort of act of oblivion, and at the same time promised to be more obedient in future emergencies?

Free, Germany now surely was; but unity was yet to come. And it seemed far enough off when one contemplated the sullen attitude of Bavaria and the other southern states which for religious or political reasons had cast in their lot with that of Austria during the recent war. But the dreams of a closely knit fatherland were nearer to realization than perhaps even the most sanguine dared to hope. Of the well-known events, however, of the next few years



but little need be said. Dissatisfaction had been growing in France ever since the phenomenal growth of Prussia had foreshadowed that outburst of Pangermanism the first Napoleon had done so much to throttle. As far back as 1867, therefore, Napoleon III., disappointed in his Mexican schemes, had endeavored to compensate his nation for the territorial aggrandizement of Prussia by purchasing from Holland the Duchy of Luxemburg; but Bismarck had nipped the negotiations in the bud. Fully alive, however, to the dangers of a brewing domestic storm, the French Emperor continued to study the map of Europe, with the vain hope of diverting popular wrath from the usurpations and corruption of his own degraded government by adding to France new fame and prestige.

Here also Bismarck checkmated him. The Luxemburg negotiations having been dismally foiled, we see Napoleon next harboring designs on Belgium, and holding out to Prussia the glittering bribe of a free hand in German affairs on condition that no opposition should be made by her to France's forcible annexation of Belgium. This scheme Bismarck also crushed. Turn whithersoever he would, therefore, Napoleon saw in Prussia an obstacle in his pathway which he could neither buy nor intimidate. There seemed to him but one course to pursue. He must cut down the barrier that threatened the supremacy of France in European affairs. That the work, moreover, must be done promptly appeared to be plain enough in view of the approaching adoption by the North German army of an improved weapon claimed by experts to be superior to the *chassepot* of the French battalions. But Napoleon was sore bested for a pretext for going to war. Hence, with the clutch of a drowning man, he seized upon the candidacy of Prince Leopold, of the Hohenzollern house, for the vacant throne of Spain as affording the proper occasion for taking up arms; and, notwithstanding the formal avowal on the part of the Spanish government that Bismarck had not in the slightest measure been interested in the matter, persisted in professing to believe that Prussian ambition was back of it all.

Urged on, therefore, by the Duc de Gramont and Ollivier, the moving spirits of the war party, Napoleon refused to be appeased even after the Hohenzollern prince, in the interests of peace, graciously withdrew from the race. The yellow newspapers of Paris kept public excitement at the highest pitch, and it was obvious that the French government was bent upon mischief. But in spite of Benedetti's insolent conduct at Ems, the good old king of Prussia was conscientiously hoping for peace. Bismarck, meanwhile, was fully persuaded that the moment for action had arrived, and, first ascertaining from Generals Roon and Moltke that Prussia was ready, he craftily "edited" the famous dispatch in such a manner as to transform its pacific words into what the French regarded as an unpardonable insult to their representative. Hence, while the war was bound to come sooner or later, it was Bismarck's dart that sent the enraged bull headlong to destruction.

It is impossible to overestimate the solidifying effect upon the German states of their struggle with a foreign foe. To Napoleon, who had counted at least upon the neutrality of the south, it was a great surprise to find that no sooner were hostilities begun than all parts of the Fatherland instinctively drew together. During those eventful days Bismarck's restless activity carefully prepared the ground, and France quickly found herself without an ally. Indeed, what little active sympathy she might have won was effectually destroyed by Bismarck's publication, at the proper time, of Benedetti's overtures respecting the annexation of Belgium, and by the dignified letter to the European powers wherein the Chancellor set forth in a plain, straightforward way the attitude of the Confederation. Nor did Bismarck hesitate for one brief moment to share with the unconquerable legions of the Rhine the dangers and privations which are encountered by even the best-equipped of armies. As in the war with Austria, we find him (now elevated to the rank of general) following his king to the battlefields of France; and whether amid the flying shells at Gravelotte or treating with the captured Emperor after the fall of Sedan, he always displays the same

feudal loyalty to his royal master which ever distinguished him in war and peace. Scarcely less noticeable is his devotion to his family. His two sons, both of whom are fighting for the Fatherland, give him grave concern. Nor does he fail to snatch a few moments, even from the passionately exciting days of September, 1870, in which to write his wife and send greetings to his daughter.

But Bismarck's most trying duties came toward the end of hostilities, when he conducted the peace negotiations with the representatives of the newly established Republic. His intimate knowledge of French character and affairs placed him at an immense advantage over Jules Favre, whom he played with as a cat does with a mouse. Meanwhile the conflict was dragging France still farther down, and to the disasters of a foreign war were soon to be added those of civil strife. All eyes were now on Bismarck. The future of France lay in his hands. Would he recognize the Republic or bring back the Bonapartists? To him the matter seems to have possessed little importance save in so far as it affected the interests of his own country; and, fully convinced that the Republic would confine French activities at home, he coolly extended his hand to Thiers. In his own picturesque language, he would "let Paris simmer in her own juice."

Bismarck's greatest victory was that of January 18, 1871, when all the German states, northern and southern, offered to King William of Prussia the renewed title and crown of German Emperor. For his conduct during the peace negotiations that followed, Bismarck—now a prince and chancellor of the empire—has been frequently criticised; but it is difficult to see in the acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine anything else than a wise precaution for the future. So far, moreover, from having been a violation of the sacred right of nationality, as has been alleged, for example, by even so calm a person ordinarily as the eminent Spanish statesman Castellar, Germany simply got back what had once been her own. Much less, however, can be said in defense of the billion dollar indemnity Bismarck exacted of crushed and apparently ruined France; and it does not speak well for his

magnanimity—if he ever had any—that even that exorbitant sum was only half of what he had demanded before external pressure caused him to cut the amount in two. Had he foreseen the wonderfully recuperative powers of France, is it reasonable to suppose that she would have fared as well as she did?

As we have said already, the establishment of the German Empire brought fresh honors to Bismarck, of which the most important, of course, was the office of Imperial Chancellor. His service of almost twenty years in the latter capacity naturally suggests the two subjects of his foreign and his domestic policy. The keynote of the former was the isolation of France. Anticipating the *révanche* ideas of Germany's writhing foe, his fixed purpose, so far as his foreign relations extended, was to gain for Germany the time she needed wherein to digest her territorial gains and perfect the growth of federal principles. But to carry out the tasks he thus set before himself required more than ordinary energy and watchfulness; for the sudden rise of a new power caused no slight ripple on the surface of European politics. Statesmen everywhere were wondering what new phase the Pangerman movement, upborne by its magnificent achievements, would now assume. In Bismarck, too, Europe suddenly recognized a man whose genius and ambition towered high above the head of the average minister of the day. But Bismarck knew how to convince every one that Germany was sincere in her pacific professions. To gather up the intricate threads, however, of the diplomatic net in which he tied up fast that peace of Europe which has lasted till now, would require volumes. It was impossible for France to find an ally anywhere. A nod from Bismarck put an end to the temporal power of the Pope, and also prevented anything approaching a durable understanding between united Italy and the enemy of Germany. The Triple Alliance subsequently entered into between Austria, Italy, and Germany still further contributed to international concord. In like manner Bismarck sowed the seeds of future trouble between France and Great Britain by simultaneously encouraging the ambitions

of the former respecting Tunis, and the designs of the latter upon Egypt, while his own disclosures of five years ago revealed to astounded Europe the fact that during the existence of the Triple Alliance he recovered the waning friendship of Russia by entering into a secret treaty with her by the terms of which either would assist the other in case of an unprovoked attack! It was these bewildering occult combinations that placed Germany at the head of European affairs and gave to Berlin a prominence that had never before been hers.

That Bismarck was sincere in his expressions regarding the peaceful intentions of the Fatherland was shown very conclusively by his attitude during the Turco-Russian war; and it was perhaps more largely due to him than to any other one man that Great Britain and Russia did not fly at each other's throats when the cunning of the former thwarted the latter's legitimate aspirations in Southeastern Europe. His own interest in the Eastern question appears to have been of the slightest; for it was at this time that he used those oft-quoted words: "The whole of Bulgaria is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier."

In his work as President of the Congress of Berlin, which met in 1878, to adjust the disputes growing out of the war between Turkey and Russia, Bismarck displayed consummate skill. It is true he lost the friendship of Gortchakof, but he gained the lasting gratitude of Austria by securing for her both Bosnia and Herzegovina. A double motive actuated him in performing this good deed for the Hapsburgers. He thus drove Austria farther and farther eastward, and consequently away from Germany, and at the same time prevented a combination between her and Russia hostile to Germany. In like manner the secret treaty he entered into later on with Russia prevented the alliance between that country and France which he ever saw looming above the horizon of the future.

Scarcely less far-reaching in its consequences was another feature of Bismarck's foreign policy: his adoption of colonial ideas. Fully recognizing that the future of the

world belongs to the great states, he gave up in 1884 his earlier views and became outspoken in behalf of a colonial system which would afford not only an outlet to the surplus population of the Fatherland, but also markets for the rapidly growing industries of the Empire. To his influence, therefore, was mainly due the Berlin Conference of 1884, which resulted in the partition of Africa—an event the importance of which has each year become greater and greater. Although the vast territory which Germany gained both in the Dark Continent and in the islands of the Pacific has not prospered, it would be rash to say that Germany's colonial system as founded by Bismarck will never be developed. On the contrary, taken in connection with the world-wide growth of her trade, in which she is now England's most formidable competitor everywhere, it is easy to picture a Greater Germany beyond the seas.

Great as Bismarck's triumphs were in the field of diplomacy, his limitations become apparent when we come to examine his domestic policy. Ignorant of economic science, he made repeated mistakes. Even his views on the money question appear to have been far from stable, and his scheme of protection was not designed to protect German manufactures so much as the interests of the landholding aristocracy. His contributions to the fiscal agencies of the country were more creditable; and whatever views one may entertain respecting his elevation of the idea of the state, it ought not to be forgotten that Prussia's acquisition of the means of transportation and communication were positive gains to the public, to say nothing of the increased opportunities their purchase afforded for carrying forward those great social reforms, like the insurance of workingmen and similar measures. But, aside from his apparent conversion, one might almost say, to the views of the state socialist, two experiences of Bismarck in connection with his domestic policy stand out above all others. These, of course, are his relations with Rome, growing out of the so-called *cultur-kampf* and his repressive measures against the Socialists. The former, as is well known, was a revival of the old investiture question of the Middle Ages, compli-

cated by the newly proclaimed doctrine of papal infallibility. Although one can easily sympathize with the essentially necessary principle of the supremacy and independence of the state, Bismarck, in the so-called struggle against the "Black International," went to inexcusable lengths when, through some of the provisions of the Falk laws, he strove to make the Roman hierarchy virtually a branch of the civil service. No less unjust was his expulsion of the Jesuits. And, in view of the large number of Roman Catholics throughout the empire, but especially in Silesia and Southern Germany, this religious antagonism was, to say the least of it, impolitic and inconsiderate. The dismal failure, moreover, of the so-called Old Catholic revival, the futile persecution of the bishops, and the ill-starred movement under Dr. Döllinger, all united in the creation of conditions by no means conducive to domestic tranquillity; while the ultramontane party, especially under the leadership of Dr. Windthorst, developed unexpected strength. Notwithstanding his repeated boast, therefore, that he would not go to Canossa, Bismarck eventually discovered that he must travel the road of Henry IV. Only the virtual repeal of the most obnoxious features of the Falk laws saved the empire from violent scenes.

Doomed also to speedy failure were Bismarck's ill-devised efforts to crush the great liberal movement known as socialism, a movement largely the result of his own military system. He seemed to be ignorant of the fact that he was dealing with a people altogether different from the one he had put down some twenty-five years earlier; for, in spite of arrests and fines and the suppression of free speech, the Socialists gained ground at each election. Meanwhile the old Emperor had passed away, and "Unser Fritz" had also come and gone, after a brief reign of less than one hundred days. In the new sovereign, William II., Bismarck met a man who, like himself, entertained pronounced views on the social question, and although the quarrel between the two was bound to come sooner or later, even the young Emperor himself has expressed regret that the great Chancel-

lor left office after having been virtually dismissed from it that stormy day in the early part of 1890.

It is too early yet to pass judgment on Bismarck's character. One thing that especially attracts us is the fact that he was exactly fitted for the great work of his life. His great strength of mind and body, his aggressive nature, his readiness to change his opinions when convinced he had found better ones, his martial qualities, and his calm demeanor in times of danger (witness his conduct when several attempts were made to assassinate him), combined to make him a natural leader. Of his intellectual powers much has been already said. A wide reader, a great table talker, a charming letter writer, he was not conspicuous as a brilliant, fascinating popular orator; but, notwithstanding a certain hesitancy of speech, he always knew what he wanted to say, and never failed to draw a crowd to the Reichstag. He remained a countryman throughout life. Whether at Kniephof, Schönhofen, Varzin, or Friedrichsruh, he never failed to manifest that innate love of the soil which clung to him at all times and everywhere. An ardent lover of nature, he delighted in hunting, shooting, and fishing, while his devotion to animals was proverbial. Equally marked was his loving loyalty to his family. His affection for his wife was beautiful; and in an empire of happy homes there was no home where simple devotion wielded a gentler and purer influence than in Friedrichsruh. There was perfect confidence. Each Christmas brought its presents for all. Bismarck's feudal loyalty to his royal master carries one back to the Middle Ages. He was ready to die for old William at any time. His patriotism knew no bounds. But while he could love, he could also hate. He destroyed completely his perhaps greatest personal enemy, Count von Arnim. A natural pleasure in wrath, however, was not part of his character. His sense of humor was too great for that, to say nothing of that love of society which ever made his home, whether in Berlin or in the country, one of the merriest and most hospitable of places.

Another advantage enjoyed by Bismarck was the fact that



he always knew what he wanted, and drove straight to the point. This concentration of energy never deserted him. Once persuaded that he was on the right track, he bent every nerve to gain his ends; and although he was not always scrupulous about the means he employed, he is to be judged—we say it reluctantly—by the canons of statecraft current several centuries ago rather than by those of present morals. A born opportunist, he rarely failed to know when the time for action had arrived, and then struck swiftly and with all his might. This he did in spite of the deepest religious convictions; for, as we have seen, throughout his long and stormy career Bismarck was an earnest believer in an overruling Providence that guides the course of history. But while his conduct in public affairs was directed wholly by reasons of state, his private character was singularly pure. Chaste and honest he always was; and although charges of immorality were sometimes brought against him, their falsity was so palpable that no one believed them.

Bismarck also had in an extraordinary degree another quality which a constructive statesman should especially possess: a knowledge of men. Men and parties he manipulated as a chess player does his pieces. Never what is called popular, Bismarck possessed few, if any, really intimate friends; but, as occasion demanded, he could always rally to his support those who had been his bitterest political opponents. He touched the mainspring of human action. He would summon to his aid every instrument in his power. His control of the press is familiar to all the world. Whether as a writer of editorials, or the prosecutor of journalists, or the treasurer of the so-called “reptile fund,” Bismarck did much in this way to mould the public opinion both of Germany and Europe. A watchful observer, he knew how to spread his sail and defy any storm that might arise on the Continent. Egotistical he may have been, and likewise ambitious; but his egotism was possibly excusable, while his ambition was not a selfish one. His country was ever foremost in his aims and hopes. His ardent patriotism explains many episodes in his public career which one would rather

not find there—as, for example, his treatment of Poland and his opposition to the Jews.

Finally, in estimating the character of Bismarck several things are to be borne in mind. We are to remember that as the guiding spirit in the great struggle of the German people for unity and freedom he was largely fighting, under modern circumstances, a fight which had taken place elsewhere several centuries earlier. We are to judge him, therefore, as already intimated, not so much by the exalted ethical standards which obtain among men who—thanks to their ancestors—live under firmly established national governments and all the favorable moral conditions arising therefrom, but rather by those tests which we employ in judging the statesmen of the formative period of a country's history. Applying these standards to Bismarck, we can easily explain those two elements in his character which instinctively occur to one when his name is mentioned: his great strength and his belief in the all-sufficiency of force. To accomplish his work as the unifier and emancipator of his people, strength and force were necessary. Bismarck failed, however, when he endeavored to employ against his own people the weapons he had used with such magnificent results against the foreign enemies of the Fatherland; but while his domestic policy broke down, it does not rob him of his title to greatness. History will do him full justice, and, whether it approves or condemns his methods and purposes, Bismarck will be regarded as one of the most colossal figures of the nineteenth century and one of the supremely great men of the world.

B. J. RAMAGE.